



The Beacon

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Ronald Hicks, Deputy Administrator

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bea-con (bê ' ken) *noun*

A signaling or guiding device, such as a lighthouse, located on a coast. A source of guidance or

RON'S CORNER

New Office of Management Newsletter: The Beacon

by Ron Hicks
Deputy Administrator,
Office of Management
Telephone: 202-720-4425

As you may know, we in the Office of Management (OM) have been considering the merger of our two existing newsletters. The *Express* published personnel news by our Human Resources Division, while the *Service Beacon* provided information from the other Divisions and Staffs in OM. In response to many of our readers' comments and as a cost savings measure, we are pleased to announce that OM will publish a consolidated monthly newsletter.

I have asked all of the Division and Staff Directors within OM to contribute regularly to this publication. Specifically, I requested that each OM function provide items that are both interesting and educational to all of readers. As was a common practice in the *Service Beacon* and the *Express* we welcome articles from the other program areas that are relevant to OM's mission.

I have asked Kevin Dressman to serve as Editor of this newsletter. I am requesting your comments and feedback on the effectiveness of

this new publication as well as suggestions for future articles.

OM Assistant Deputy Administrator Recommended

On May 7, 1999, I announced our recommendation of Jeanne Axtell for the position of Assistant Deputy Administrator of OM. Until her recent selection, Jeanne served in many capacities within the Office of Field Operations since 1970. Many of her duties directly related to the activities of OM.

Jeanne succeeds former Assistant Deputy Administrator, OM, William West. While sharing the responsibility of managing all of OM, Jeanne will have lead responsibility for budget, finance, information technology, and internal controls.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Telecommunications Update – FTS2001

by Rick Utt
Automated Information Systems
Division
Telephone: 202-720-4905

The Department of Agriculture has selected MCI WORLDCOM as its FTS2001 Program contractor. The selection was made in March 1999. The current contract, FTS2000, will end on September 30, 2000 and will be phased out over the next two

years. FTS2001 is an eight-year contract that offers a comprehensive range of telecommunication services, equipment, state-of-the-art ordering, billing, troubleshooting, repair, and other support services.

FSIS plans to employ many of the features on the FTS2001 contract. Long distance telephone, calling cards, toll free services, and frame relay are some of the services that will be used by FSIS. FSIS is working closely with the Department and the General Services Administration on an aggressive transition plan, with an anticipated completion date of September 2000.

New ordering processes for FSIS are being developed to meet FTS2001 contact requirements. Although the FSIS transition schedule is time consuming, it is not anticipated to impact the delivery of services to the Agency. For example, all current AT&T calling cards will be replaced with new MCI calling cards by September 2000.

The User Services Branch will keep the Agency informed of the progress

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of the transition. If you have any questions, please contact the MicroSupport Help Desk at 202-720-4016, or call toll free at 1-877-277-4783.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Orientation Handbook

by Employment Section (Field)
Telephone: 612-370-2000
Employment Services and Policy Branch (Headquarters)
Telephone: 202-720-6617
Human Resources Division

The Employment Services and Policy Branch in Washington, DC (at 202-720-6617), and the Personnel Operations Branch (POB) (at 612-370-2000 or 1-800-370-3747) in Minneapolis, MN, provide all new employees with an Employee Resource Handbook. This Handbook contains basic policy and procedural information to help the new member of the FSIS team become acclimated with the organization and their new position. Additional individual copies of these handbooks may be requested from the appropriate branch.

What Was That Masked Man's Name

If the telephone isn't handy and there's no time to send a letter, you can now access POB-Minneapolis, Benefits and Workers Compensation Section (B&WCS), via your computer and HPDesk by simply sending your question to "BENEFITS".

The capability of accessing POB-B&WCS via HPDesk has been available for several years, but in the past you needed a person's name in order to send your question.

You may still access B&WCS that way, but now when those brain cells

fail you and you can't remember the name, simply type "BENEFITS".

A reminder, that there also is a segment of the HPDesk Library called "Benefits". In there are many items that apply to you as an individual. You may wish to periodically access this area, as we will be continuing to build and expand information in this area. One of the items posted there each month, is the update on the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) activity for the previous month. Just as you do at the Library, "check us out".

Answers to your questions on benefits can also be received directly from the Benefits and Workers Compensation Section in Minneapolis by calling 612-370-2000 or 1-800-370-3747.

Requests for Employment Verification

Field employees are reminded that all requests for employment verification are to be forwarded to POB in Minneapolis, MN, for uniform completion. Turnaround time is delayed when requests are directed to supervisors, establishments, district offices, or Washington, DC, since they must then be forwarded to POB for completion.

These forms are completed based on information from the employee's official personnel folder. To expedite processing of these requests, employees should furnish the following address to requestors:

USDA, FSIS
Personnel Operations Branch
Butler Square West, 4th Floor
100 North Sixth Street
Minneapolis, MN 55403

The employment verification request forms may also be faxed to the following number: 612-370-2377

Applying for Combination Positions

Effective April 1, 1997, the recurring vacancy system was expanded to cover combination positions. When these positions are filled, first consideration is given to employees who have applied to the recurring vacancy system for combination positions. These jobs are advertised only when insufficient candidates have applied to the recurring system. Therefore, inspectors are encouraged to submit applications to the recurring system if they want to receive consideration for combination jobs. Job elements can be obtained by contacting Bonnie Falk or Terry Rider in the Internal Placement Section, at 1-800-370-3747, extensions 2528 and 2522, respectively.

Information Available to Applicants for Field Vacancies

In response to inquiries from the National Joint Council, the Human Resources Division (HRD) has been exploring methods to provide feedback to promotion applicants on their applications for promotion. Information related to specific element ratings cannot be provided because rating schedules are viewed as examination material and, as such, are confidential. Specifically, they contain pertinent details about what experiences and other factors constitute a superior application. Since we generally use the same evaluation criteria to fill subsequent vacancies, releasing this information would impair the value and fairness of the evaluation process for future use.

However, we can provide applicants with some general information about the overall quality of their responses to job elements and their prospects for referral for vacancies. This information will be provided in writing, in response to either a written or telephone request (1-800-

370-3747) to the contact person listed on a vacancy announcement. For recurring vacancies, contact Bonnie Falk, Terry Rider, or Darcy Long in the Internal Placements Section, Personnel Operations Branch at 1-800-370-3747, extensions 2528, 2522, or 2572, respectively.

Applicants to the recurring vacancy system are reminded that you must submit an updated performance rating by July 1, 1999 (if your last name starts with A through L) or October 1, 1999 (if your last name starts with M through Z) to keep your application current. If you have submitted an application to the recurring system since April 1997, you may wish to request some feedback on your previous application before submitting your updated rating to determine if it would be helpful to revise your application. Please contact POB at the numbers listed above if you would like to do so.

New Merit Promotion Procedures on June 1

HRD wants to advise all employees of the recent changes to FSIS Directive 4335.1, Merit Promotion Plan. The directive was completely rewritten and the revised procedures apply to all FSIS announced vacancies that open on or after June 1. The major changes are summarized below:

The new Merit Promotion Plan:

- Requires that employees and applicants meet the qualification requirements within 30 days *after* the closing date of the vacancy announcement, instead of *by* the closing date. (This gives employees and applicants a 30-day window to qualify.)
- Changes the procedure for identifying the "best qualified" when there are 10 or fewer applicants competing for promotion.
- Eliminates the maximum of 10 "best qualified" candidates on a promotion certificate. More (or fewer) than 10 "best qualified" candidates may be referred based on the promotion panel's evaluation.
- Changes the interview policy for non-bargaining unit positions. Selecting officials are encouraged (but not required) to interview all the candidates on the promotion certificate for non-bargaining unit positions before making a selection from the certificate. (Interviews are still required for positions at grades 13-15 until further notice. See FSIS Notice 44-98.)
- Continues the previous interview policy for bargaining unit positions. (If the selecting official interviews one candidate on the promotion certificate, all candidates on the certificate must be interviewed.)
- States that vacancy announcements, which limit the area of consideration to a specific geographic area (e.g., a particular District or the local commuting area), will indicate if employees and applicants outside that geographic area can apply.
- Designates the minimum "area of consideration" for vacancies primarily by the *type* of position (e.g., clerical, technical, administrative, or professional), rather than for specific positions.
- Updates the career ladders for most FSIS positions.
- Publishes the eligibility requirements for advancement to the next higher grade when an employee's position has further promotion potential.
- Publishes the sources of vacancy information. Employees who are seeking promotion or other job opportunities should frequently check for available vacancies, even while on extended approved absence or away from the duty station on official business. (HRD will periodically remind employees of these information sources through other agency communications.)

For more details, see Directive 4335.1, which will be distributed to all employees.

For questions on Merit Promotion Plan contact Employment Services and Policy Branch in Washington at 202-720-6617 or the Internal Placement Section in Mineapolis at 312-370-2000 or 1-800-370-3747.

So You've Been Subpoenaed....

If you receive a subpoena, notification to testify in court or at a hearing, notify your supervisor, then immediately fax the subpoena to the Employee Relations Branch (ERB), Labor and Employee Relations Division, Washington, DC, Fax: 202-690-3938.

Once your subpoena is received by the ERB, you will be contacted by an employee relations specialist to determine what knowledge you have of the matter and if it is related to your official duties or a personal matter.

Authorization for you to testify in matters related to your official duties when the U.S. Government is not a party in the lawsuit, must be given by the Administrator, FSIS, and concurred by the Office of the General Council (OGC) prior to the court appearance date. This process takes time, therefore, you will need to send the subpoena to ERB promptly.

If documents are requested through the subpoena, the employee is not to take the documents to court. Those documents are handled by the Freedom of Information Act Office and will be sent directly to the requesting attorney.

Please call the Employee Relations Branch, L&ERD, at 800-217-1886 with any questions.

Garnishment Orders for Child Support/Alimony and Commercial Debts

As a Federal employee, you should be aware that a portion of your disposable income may be subject to garnishment for payment of court ordered child support, alimony, and commercial debts. Your pay is subject to garnishment whether you are in a full-time, part-time, or intermittent pay status.

Disposable income that is subject to garnishment includes regular and overtime pay, cash awards, worker's compensation, and severance pay. Deductions that are mandatory by law (e.g. federal, state, and local taxes, health and life insurance, retirement, Social Security and Medicare taxes) are not considered part of your disposable income, and are therefore not subject to garnishment.

The Consumer Credit Protection Act establishes maximum garnishment limitations for such debts. For *child support and alimony*, the maximum withholding limitations can be up to 65% of disposable earnings. *Commercial debts* are honored on a first come, first served basis and are limited to 25% of an employee's disposable income. However, these debts may not be honored if an order of higher priority is already in effect which takes 25% or more of disposable income (e.g. an order for child support/alimony, a bankruptcy action, or a Federal tax levy). Also, commercial debts cannot be effected if an employee's weekly disposable pay is less than 30 times the hourly minimum wage (\$5.15) under the Fair Labor Standards Act (e.g. \$154.50 per week).

The Labor and Employee Relations Division in Washington, DC is the office that accepts and processes legally served garnishment actions. Employees who have questions about the garnishment process should contact Kristen Brown at 1-800-217-1886. Further information can also be found in Directive 4550.2, Revision 3, dated April 8, 1999.

Retirements

James S. Bailey, FI, OFO, Palmyra, PA, 05/31/99, 35 Years
John P. Barnett, FI, OFO, Danville, AR, 05/22/99, 21 Years
Douglas E. Carter, Compliance Officer, OFO, Columbia, SC, 04/30/99, 37 Years
Mary L. Duckett, FI, OFO, Nashville, AR, 05/22/99, 6 Years
Jerry W. Fletcher, FI, OFO, Gainesville, GA, 05/01/99, 33 Years
Darryl L. Hart, FI, OFO, Hatfield, PA, 05/01/99, 28 Years
Eileen B. Henry, FI, OFO, Seguin, TX, 04/30/99, 12 Years
Herbert W. Hoffman, FI, OFO, Stockton, CA, 05/01/99, 32 Years
Melvin L. Lawson, FI, OFO, New Brockton, AL, 4 Years
Marian L. Mann, FI, OFO, Sioux City, IA, 05/31/99, 12 Years
Charles M. Mapp, FI, OFO, NY-Queens, NY, 05/31/99, 12 Years
Doyle Marshall, FI, OFO, Nashville, AR, 04/30/99, 33 Years
Kenneth L. McDonald, FI, OFO, Decatur, AR, 05/31/99, 13 Years
Samuel A. Nichols, FI, OFO, Dobson, NC, 05/28/99, 27 Years
Dale R. Osmonson, FI, OFO, San Gabriel, CA, 05/08/99, 25 Years
James P. Patton, SVMO, OFO, Seguin, TX, 05/09/99, 14 Years
Candace E. Smith, FI, OFO, Edinburg, VA, 05/22/99, 13 Years
Mary L. Turner, FI, Pine Bluff, AR, 05/08/99, 14 Years
Charles Warner, FI, Canton, OH, 05/22/99, 34 Years

Thrift Savings Plan Update

Attachment 1 to this edition of the *Beacon* provides information on the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) return rates as of May 10, 1999. For questions regarding the TSP, contact the Benefits and Workers Compensation Section in Minneapolis, MN at 612-370-2000 or 1-800-370-3747

Leave Transfer Recipients

Attachment 2 to this edition of the *Beacon* provides an update of the Leave Transfer program. For questions about the Leave Transfer Program, contact the Classification and Compensation Branch on 202-720-6287 (Headquarters employees) or the Personnel Operations Branch, Employment Section on 612-370-2000 or 1-800-370-3747 (Field employees).

SUPPLIES

Frequently Asked Questions

by *Pete Bridgeman*
 Administrative Services Division
 Telephone: 301-504-4222

We get a number of questions related to supplies on the Supply Hot Line, as well as on Feedback Forms sent in to this office, and through the 1999 *Service Beacon* Reader Survey. Here's some answers to some of the more frequently asked questions.

Q: *Where do we get a stopwatch for presentation tests in poultry establishments as required?*

A: According to the Poultry Slaughter Operations Staff at the Technical Service Center, a stopwatch is required primarily for checking line speeds in poultry slaughter operations, and these are usually provided either by the plant, or the inspector uses his/her own watch. The Agency does not provide these items.

Q: *How long should you wait to reorder supplies that were on back order - one month or two months?*

A: You don't need to reorder an item that has been listed on your packing list as backordered (indicated with a "B"). When the item comes in, your backorder will be filled immediately. If you reorder the same item, you will eventually receive it twice. If you are unsure about the status of an item, the best thing to do is to call PPMVSS at 1-800-714-8335, have your order number and the item you are waiting for, and we can check on the status of it.

Q: *Why does everything on an order not arrive all at one time? The system needs some efficiency and improvement?*

A: We agree and have taken steps toward improving this aspect of the system. When Landover first took over the handling of FSIS' Field Supply System, there were some limitations to what they could do. While they were able to provide an "on-demand" system, which meant our customers could order supplies as needed, instead of on a 3 or 6 month cycle, their system did have its inefficiencies. For example, Specialty Items and Accountable Forms were housed in the "cage" area, while all other forms were stored in two separate locations of the warehouse. When an order was keyed into the system, pick tickets went out for each section of the warehouse where items were stored, so one order could be split into 3 different orders for picking. This speeded up the process for picking an order, but they hadn't mastered bringing the different parts of an order back together before shipping. At the time, this would have slowed the process back down. So efficiency would have cost the expediency of getting the orders out the door. Expediency was the

priority. They recently resolved this problem, and orders are now being brought back together and shipped out as one order, in a more expedient manner. Another inefficiency was having to order Supply Items separate from Specialty Items and Forms. The Supply Items are housed in a completely different warehouse, which is run by a completely different system. This is still the case, so we still require orders to be sent in on separate CFPDC-1's. This will hopefully be resolved within the next year. Landover is working towards merging the different systems into one system, at which time "mixed orders" will no longer be an issue.

Q: *When will we be getting .33 cent stamps?*

A: We won't be. The Postal Service is not planning to issue any 33 cent Official Government Use Postage Stamps, so we will have to use combinations of 32 cent and 1 cent stamps, or 23 cent and 10 cent stamps.

Q: *It seems wasteful to ship low cost items (paper, batteries, etc) clear across the country...why can't each circuit have a supply depot for low cost items?*

A: We used to have Regional Supply Depots in the regional offices and, in some cases, the Area Offices provided some of the basic supply items to the field, as well. However, this did require more work-hours, more space to store these items, and ultimately, a lot more overhead costs than the cost to ship them from a central location. Operating the supply system out of Landover instead of the 5 regional offices has realized a savings, in overhead costs (which includes shipping costs) of 1.5 million dollars annually. We have used some of these savings to provide more items to the field, and to improve the

quality of items provided. Overall, there is still a savings, annually, of approximately \$750,000 in the operation of the supply system compared to the cost to operate it from the regions. We are exploring, however, other possible means of allowing field personnel to obtain items such as paper and batteries locally, because it does cost more, in some cases, to ship the items than it cost to purchase them.

Q: *I have a FAIM computer at my workplace. Can orders to Landover be sent electronically?*

A: Not at this time, but electronic ordering is coming. When the system at Landover is upgraded, it will have the capability required to handle electronic orders from all of our field customers. At this time, while there is electronic order capability, it is limited in its capacity, and the system is currently overloaded in terms of electronic customers.

Q: *What is different about the new Lightweight Hard-Hat Helmet (FSIS-61)?*

A: The main difference is that it weighs about 2 1/2 ounces lighter than the regular hard hat helmet (FSIS-04H), and the suspension liner is made of a lighter plastic material. It meets the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards for workplace safety. It was primarily added to the inventory for use in poultry plants where there were concerns about the bump cap, which does not meet ANSI standards, but where inspectors felt the standard hard hat helmet was too heavy to wear all day on the line. We field tested the lightweight helmet, in cooperation with members of the Mid-Atlantic Council of the NJC, and found this particular helmet to provide both the safety protection and comfort required as a lightweight alternative to the hard-hat helmet.

Q: *When is the new Supply Catalog coming out? Why don't you provide an electronic version of the catalog?*

A: We originally planned to publish an updated catalog in May. However, we decided to use some newly acquired digital technology to include pictures of supply and specialty items in the catalog, and this is going to take a little longer to put together. We're still shooting for distribution of the new catalog sometime in July; we'll keep you posted, through the *Beacon*, on developments along those lines.

When we have the revised catalog ready to go, we will send an electronic version of it to the FAIM Division for inclusion in the next release of electronic forms. For those of you with computers, it will simplify the process of looking for a form or specialty item number.

We welcome your input and feedback. Many of the improvements that have been made to the Field Supply System have come as a result of your ideas and suggestions. While we might not be able to implement every new idea that comes in, we will look at every suggestion with an open mind. If it makes sense, and will result in an improvement to the system, we won't hesitate to implement it.

Correction

In the May issue of the *Service Beacon*, we published an addendum for the Field Supply System catalog that included a listing of Unit of Issue changes. The first item on that listing, FSIS 2450-5, should not have been included on that list. That form should be ordered directly from the Personal Property, Motor Vehicle and Supply Section when requesting a Government Vehicle. It does not need to be ordered from Landover.

TRAVEL

Keep those Travel Vouchers Coming...On Time!

by: Barbara McNiff
Budget Division
Telephone: 202-720-3061

The Federal Travel Regulations (Section 301-52.7) states, "Unless your agency administratively requires you to submit your travel claim within a shorter timeframe, you must submit your travel claim as follows:

- (a) Within 5 working days after you complete your trip or period of travel; or
- (b) Every 30 days if you are in continuous travel status.

Since FSIS does not require the submission of vouchers within a shorter timeframe than that required by the FTR's, travelers must adhere to the 5 working day limit.

Some employees are delaying the submission of their travel vouchers for several months. This practice causes unnecessary additional work for other Agency employees in two ways. First, in many cases, the travel authorization expires 30 days after the dates of travel. This requires a new travel authorization to be issued and transmitted by the District Offices and Financial Processing Center respectively, offices which already have very heavy workloads. Secondly, in this time of very tight budgets, it makes it very difficult for managers to budget properly if they have outstanding obligations of which they are unaware.

Mailing Address Options for Travel Reimbursement Checks

There are several mailing options for travel voucher reimbursement checks. These options are included

in SECTION B of the travel voucher – TRAVEL VOUCHER MAILING ADDRESS OPTIONS.

If you want your travel check to go to the *same location as your salary check*, check block 17, Salary Address. If you want your travel check to go to a *special address* mark block 19, SPECIAL ADDRESS and complete lines, 1, 2 and 3 under block 19. (Do not show traveler's name; that will be generated by the system.) Mark block 21 if you want your travel reimbursement check to be sent *electronically to an EFT account other than the one to which your salary check is sent*. On Line 1 enter the code used to identify the EFT account. This code consists of a 9-position routing number for the financial institution; a 1-position alpha character for the account type (C for checking and S for savings) and the account number (not to exceed 25 positions). Leave Lines 2 and 3 blank. Do not show spaces or special characters in the EFT Account Code. (i.e., 123456789C1234567788). This EFT account will NOT be stored in the travel system for future use. *Each time a traveler wishes to use the Travel EFT account address option, block 19 must be checked and the full EFT account number must be shown on Line 1.*

This information is included in the Step-by-Step Instructions for Completion of Travel Vouchers. If you would like to obtain a copy, please call 202-720-2210 or 202-720-9851. You can also fax your request to 202-690-3989. Please include an address to where the instructions should be sent.

Relocation Income Tax (RIT) Claims for Transferring Employees

All transferring employees must file a RIT claim(s) the year(s) after they received reimbursement for any relocation allowance. These claims

must first be approved by the Fiscal Services Branch, Budget Division before they can be processed by the National Finance Center (NFC). Many of these claims were sent directly to the NFC. NFC, however, simply returned them to the Budget Division without action. Sending these claims directly to NFC only delays the process. The RIT claim, like all relocation vouchers must first be approved within the Agency prior to submission to NFC.

New Relocation Allowances

In February 1999, the Agency implemented the Fix Amount Reimbursement (FAR) method for house hunting trips. This gave the employees a choice between a pre-determined fixed amount for their house hunting trip, which did not require receipts or itemizations on the travel voucher and the conventional actual expense method. The Agency has now decided to implement a FAR method for temporary quarters. If employees opt, they may be authorized a fixed amount for temporary quarters based on the locale of the new duty station and may file a simplified voucher that does not require receipts or itemization. Employees who do not want this option may continue to be authorized temporary quarters under the actual expense method. Transferring employees should read the material sent to them in the relocation packet to ensure they understand these new allowances, so that they choose the one that is best for them.

NationsBank Charge Card for Travel

*by Sue Ayers
Budget Division
Telephone: 202-720-5068*

While most employees are now completing their official travel without encountering any problems using their VISA cards, the Fiscal Services Branch (FSB) would like to

ascertain what problems, if any, may be occurring at this time. Therefore, between now and July 15, anyone in a travel status encountering a problem in making an authorized charge or in using their card, should promptly contact Sue Ayers on 202-720-5068 or Florice Spencer on 202-720-9851. They should provide the name and location of the establishment where the authorized charging problem occurred and what happened when they tried to use their card. The Agency has received a firm commitment from VISA that they will work with those establishments in eliminating those problems. Their current merchant-category codes will need to be changed to acceptable travel-merchant-category codes. That should eliminate those charging problems.

For the more routine charge card issues, such as new applications and address changes, field employees should contact their Resource Management Staff in their District for assistance.

INTERNAL CONTROLS

Scientific and Technical Assessments in the Internal Control Staff

*by Penny Zervos
Internal Controls Staff
Telephone: 202-720-5959*

The Internal Control Staff conducts scientific and technical assessments within FSIS. The Internal Control Staff goal is to assist FSIS in achieving consistency and effectiveness in implementing its food safety mission. The objectives of the assessments may vary depending on the informational requirements or perceived problem as identified by the program managers.

The following narrative outlines the processes for conducting independent, in-depth assessments of Agency programs and operations. The work performed by the Internal Control Staff is used to verify or better understand the status of program performance. The internal assessment/audit and the special project functions are used to provide insights and information concerning specific program issues and performance.

The Internal Control Staff conducts assessments and critical analysis of sensitive and complex Agency issues to understand the strengths and vulnerabilities to implementing the food safety mission. An internal assessment/audit may be requested by the Administrator, a program area, or initiated by the Internal Control Staff as a result of program sensitivities or suspected vulnerabilities. Special projects are initiated when immediate assistance is required to analyze an incident, condition, circumstances, and policy or to answer a specific question. The assessments and analysis provides the Administrator, Deputy Administrators, and program managers with useful information to measure the effectiveness of management control systems and the improvements being made.

Extensive research and planning is required to prepare to conduct an internal assessment/audit or a special project. The Internal Control Staff helps to define the scope and objectives of the activity along with the program requestor. A project plan is prepared and agreed upon by all participants. At this point, the Internal Control Staff begins its research by gathering pertinent information, reviewing records and conducting interviews. Upon completing the data collection and analysis, a formal report is prepared to document the findings.

To better serve within FSIS, the Internal Control Staff continuously monitors the FSIS-wide technical and scientific developments, emerging food safety issues, and related public health activities. ICS also participates in intra-agency and inter-agency working groups, and task forces to contribute from its crosscutting experiences.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

National Safety Month: June 1999

*by Harry E. Springfield, Jr.
Administrative Services Division
Telephone: 215-597-4219, x-126*

In an effort to increase public awareness of the dangers Americans face each day, the National Safety Council (NSC) is sponsoring National Safety Month during the month of June 1999. It is the NSC's hope that when Americans designate a month to practicing safety, the increased attention toward living safely will continue throughout the year and ultimately decrease the number of unintentional death and injuries.

During the next 10 minutes, 2 persons will be killed and about 370 will suffer a disabling injury. On the average there are 11 unintentional-injury deaths and about 2,200 disabling injuries every hour during the year. According to the 1997 edition of "Accident Facts," by the NSC, unintentional-injury deaths were estimated to be 93,800. Work related motor vehicle and work related non-motor vehicle deaths accounted for 5,100 of these deaths. Advancements in safety, such as improvements in technology and legislation have created a safer environment for Americans, yet the unintentional death toll continues to rise. National Safety Month 1998 was the third year for this observance. The NSC's intention is

to build on success and expand National Safety Month as a yearly observance of safety, and to instill a daily practice of safety in Americans.

Based on data compiled in the "1998 Accidents Facts", the Safety Council has chosen four areas of focus (one for each week): Workplace Safety; Home Safety; First Aid and Community and, Driving Safety.

One of the NSC's objectives is public awareness of National Safety Month. Another is public understanding of the reasons for National Safety Month and recognition of organizations, such as the NSC as resources for making their environment safe. Media and public information efforts during National Safety Month 1998 reached an estimated audience of more than 50 million Americans. Another resource, especially for FSIS inspection employees is their Circuit Safety and Health Committee and the FSIS safety and health official assigned responsibility for their organizational unit (see list below). Because of the nature of their work, we are recommending that FSIS employees, and Circuit Safety and Health Committee's prioritize Workplace Safety and Driving Safety during National Safety Month.

Contact the FSIS safety and health officials listed below or the National Safety Council for resources to be used at your next Safety and Health meeting, and help FSIS and the National Safety Council observe "NATIONAL SAFETY MONTH."

FSIS Field Safety and Occupational Health Specialist's:

Harry E. Springfield, Jr., Districts of Albany, Beltsville, Boston and Philadelphia.
Tel: 800-637-6681, ext. 126
e-mail:

harry.springfield@usda.gov, or
FSISSafety@aol.com.

Ray Kobaly, Districts of Atlanta, Jackson and Raleigh.
Tel: 404-562-5961
e-mail: ray.kobaly@usda.gov

Harry Thompson, Districts of Dallas, Lawrence and Springdale.
Tel: 214-767-9124, ext. 896
e-mail: harry.thompson@usda.gov

Carol Leonard, Districts of Chicago, Des Moines, Madison and Pickerington.
Tel: 515-727-8980
e-mail: carol.leonard@usda.gov

Roger Perkerewicz, Districts of Alameda, Boulder, Minneapolis and Salem.
Tel: 303-497-5411, ext. 247
e-mail:
roger.perkerewicz@usda.gov

For those of you assigned to FSIS Laboratories, contact:

Kevin Dressman
Tel: 301-504-4247
e-mail: kevin.dressman@usda.gov

For those of you assigned to headquarters' locations in Washington, DC and other than the District Office at the BOF contact:

Laurie Segna
Tel: 301-504-4249
e-mail: laurie.segna@usda.gov

For those of you assigned to the Personal Operations Branch, Financial Processing Center, Technical Services Center or the Human Resources Development Staff, contact:

Tom Wright
Tel: 301-504-4246
e-mail: tom.wright@usda.gov

You can contact the NSC at:

National Safety Council

1121 Spring Lake Road
Itasca, IL 60143 - 3201
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ISSUANCES

Recent Agency Issuances

by Mary Wissman
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The following notices and directive have been issued since the May 1999 edition of *The Service Beacon*. Many recent issuances are available in an electronic format from the "PCDIALS" library in Opendesk and from the "Agency Issuances" public folder in the Exchange mail system (Outlook).

Notice 13-99 (4/22/99)
Employee Length-of-Service
Recognition
October 1998-March 1999

Notice 14-99 (4/28/99)
Prevention of Reprisal Policy
Statement

Notice 15-99 (5/7/99)
Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Open
Season
May 15, 1999 Through July 31,
1999

Directive 4335.1, Revision 2
(5/6/99)
Merit Promotion Plan

Directives and notices are
distributed automatically to
applicable Agency employees and

offices. Additional copies are
available from:

USDA, FSIS, ASD, P&DS
Maildrop 5241
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Beltsville, MD 20705-5241

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The current and past editions of *The Beacon* are available electronically on the FSIS OpenDesk and Exchange mail systems as well as on the FSIS Website at: www.fsis.usda.gov/om/adserv.htm

ATTACHMENT 1

Thrift Savings Plan Rates
C, F, and G Fund Monthly Returns as of May 10, 1999

Months	Barclays		Barclays		G Fund
	C Fund	Equity Index Fund	F Fund	U. S. Debt Index Fund	
1989 (Jan.- Dec.)	31.03%	31.61%	13.89%	14.45%	8.81%
1990 (Jan.- Dec.)	-3.15%	-3.19%	8.00%	8.89%	8.90%
1991 (Jan.- Dec.)	30.77%	30.42%	15.75%	16.03%	8.15%
1992 (Jan.- Dec.)	7.70%	7.61%	7.20%	7.37%	7.23%
1993 (Jan.- Dec.)	10.13%	10.10%	9.52%	9.74%	6.14%
1994 (Jan.- Dec.)	1.33%	1.32%	-2.96%	-2.94%	7.22%
1995 (Jan.- Dec.)	37.41%	37.62%	18.31%	18.49%	7.03%
1996 (Jan.- Dec.)	22.85%	22.98%	3.66%	3.73%	6.76%
1997 (Jan.- Dec.)	33.17%	33.36%	9.60%	9.65%	6.77%
1998 (Jan.- Dec.)	28.44%	28.58%	8.70%	8.69%	5.74%
1998					
May	-1.72	-1.72	.95	.95	.51
June	4.05	4.06	.85	.85	.48
July	-1.09	-1.07	.21	.21	.49
August	-14.47	-14.46	1.66	1.63	.49
September	6.33	6.41	2.36	2.34	.44
October	8.19	8.13	-.52	-.53	.41
November	6.04	6.06	.56	.57	.42
December	5.76	5.76	.30	.30	.43
1999					
January	4.19	4.18	.71	.71	.42
February	-3.09	-3.11	-1.74	-1.75	.38
March	3.99	4.00	.54	.55	.47
April	3.86		.29		.46
Last 12 months	21.72%		6.27%		5.53%

*Through 1990 the F Fund was invested in the Barclays Bond Index Fund.

The C Fund is invested in the Barclays Equity Index Fund, which tracks the S&P 500 stock index. The F Fund is invested in the Barclays U.S. Debt Index Fund, which tracks the Lehman Brothers Aggregate bond index. The G Fund is invested in special issues of U.S. Treasury securities.

The monthly C, F, and G Fund returns represent net earnings for the month, after deduction of accrued administrative expenses. The C and F Fund returns also reflect the deduction of trading costs and accrued investment management fees.

The C, F, and G Fund monthly returns are dollar-weighted: they reflect net earnings on the changing balances invested during the month. The C, F, and G Fund returns for the last twelve months assume, except for the crediting of earnings, unchanging balances (time-weighting) from month to month and assume earnings are compounded on a monthly basis.

The C and F Fund returns vary from the Barclays returns because of C and F Fund expenses and changing balances in the C and F Funds. The Barclays returns are time-weighted: they assume constant dollar balances invested during each month and throughout the period. Future performance of the three funds will vary and may be significantly different from the returns shown above. See the "Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan" for detailed information about the funds and their investment risks.

ATTACHMENT 2

Leave Transfer Recipients

1. Martha Stamps	FO, AR	Serious Illness	29. FO-99-0001	FO, MS	Surgery
2. Jackie Copeland	FO, DC	Illness	30. Linda Carey	FSEMCS, DC	Surgery
3. Mary Ann Riley	OPPDE, DC	Illness	31. FO-99-0003	FO, AR	Serious Illness
4. Esther Reed	FO, CA	Illness	32. Gary Feters	FO, IA	Serious Illness
5. James Williams	FO, SC	Surgery	33. Nancy Clyburn	OPHS, DC	Surgery
6. Annie Stewart	POB, MN	Serious Illness	34. FO-99-0007	FO, SC	Serious Illness
7. Floyd Zikmund	FO, NE	Serious Illness	35. Candace Smith	FO, VA	Serious Illness
8. Kasturi Basu	FO, DC	Surgery	36. George Olson	FO, MN	Family Illness
9. Michael Wilson	FO, AR	Surgery	37. Kellie Upshaw	FSEMCS, DC	Maternity
10. Robert Hackworth	FO, KS	Surgery	38. Traci Edmond	FSEMCS, DC	Maternity
11. John Roderick	FO, MA	Surgery	39. Yolanda Locus	OPPDE, DC	Family Illness
12. Linda Cole	OPPDE, DC	Serious Illness	40. Mary Sutton	OPHS, GA	Complications w/pregnancy
13. George Pounds	FO, AL	Serious Illness	41. FO-99-0010	FO, NC	Surgery
14. John Grzeskiewicz	FO, NY	Serious Illness	42. Cheryl Evans	FO, AR	Surgery
15. Sonya West	OPPDE, DC	Maternity	43. Diana Nolan	FO, NY	Serious Illness
16. FO-98-0034	FO, NY	Surgery	44. Richard Parmenter	FO, GA	Surgery
17. Mary Burdick	FO, PA	Complications w/pregnancy	45. Octavia Thomas	FO, GA	Complications w/pregnancy
18. Joyce Schultz	POB, MN	Serious Illness	46. Mose Tyler	FO, CA	Surgery
19. Sandra Conrad	FO, KS	Family Illness	47. Cynthia Dixon	OM, DC	Illness
20. FO-98-0031	FO, AR	Serious Illness	48. George Toups	FO, LA	Serious Illness
21. Kristine Carroll	FO, OK	Surgery	49. FO-99-0017	FO, OH	Surgery
22. Michelle Jacobson	POB, MN	Maternity	50. Marilyn Weber	FPC, IA	Illness
23. FO-98-0041	FO, DE	Family Illness	51. Robert Martz	FO, IA	Serious Illness
24. Jerry Long	FO, TN	Illness	52. Alma Lindsey	FO, IL	Illness
25. Michael Schwochert	FO, CO	Surgery	53. FO-99-0018	FO, CA	Illness
26. FO-98-0042	FO, DC	Surgery	54. Lorraine Kauffman	OM, DC	Maternity
27. Willia Stepney	OM, DC	Maternity	55. Charles Olson	FO, WI	Serious Illness
28. Michelle Carpenter	FO, OH	Complications w/pregnancy	56. Betty Morgan	FO, AR	Family Illness
			57. Gwen Groves	FO, CA	Serious Illness